

GENERAL COMMUNICATION

ABORIGINAL AND MAKASSAN RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

This research note is a resumé of work completed on the history of the Makassan voyages to Australia since the seventeenth century and the relationships established between the Makassan sailors and the Aboriginal Communities. In addition it outlines current research into the nomenclature of Makassan camp sites and other places and presents the results of the work recently carried out in Groote Eylandt.

KEYWORDS: Aborigines, Arnhem Land, history, historic sites, Makassar-Makassans, Marege, perahu, place names, trepang.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I wish to recount some of the research carried out over the last six years on what I call the Makassar-Marege connection. This research has covered the history of the Bugis Makassar people of South Sulawesi and the voyages carried out by fishermen to Marege or north Australia.

Studies have also been carried out into the type of vessel used on the voyages and the routes taken and the relationships between the Aborigines of Arnhem Land and the Makassan sailors. The study of genealogics of both Makassan and Aboriginal families has helped establish and renew the family ties broken in 1907.

In addition, I wish to identify and record the Makassan sailors' trepang processing sites, and other places.

BACKGROUND

Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, and probably long before, the fishermen of South Sulawesi from the Sultanate of Makassar have been recorded as sailing to Marege and Kayu Java to fish for the 'fruits of the sea', of which trepang has been one of the major items of commercial value (see Spillett 1987). The voyages reached as far as Cape York area of north Queensland and to King's

Sound and beyond in Western Australia. However, in the main, the voyages commenced from the city of Makassar or neighbouring towns to Bira on the south-east coast of South Sulawesi to Selayar, Flores, Alor and Kisar. There they would reprovision and water before the long sea passage to Melville Island, across to the Cobourg Peninsula, Arnhem Land, Groote Eylandt and into the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The vessels used were the traditional type of perahu called the "Padewakang", being anything from 20 to 50 tons or more, using the traditional plaited palm leaf sails, with the crew using the time honoured navigational methods of stars and sun, winds and tides. The voyages commenced with the onset of the north westerly monsoon in November and December. On reaching the north Australian coast, camps were set up, trepang was collected in the shallow bays and processed by boiling, smoke drying and sun drying. As soon as the men had a full cargo, or when the south easterly monsoon set in, in March and April, the ships would return to Makassar and the trepang sold to merchants for the China market.

As would be expected, relationships were established between the Makassan sailors and the Aboriginal communities, and intermarriage took place, descendants of which are living today in a number of towns and outstations on the Arnhem Land coast. As part of the

1988 Australian Bicentenary Commemorations the Historical Society of the Northern Territory proposed a project of historical research, reconstruction of a traditional Makassan perahu and re-enacted voyage to Australia. The project was carried out under the sponsorship of the University of Hasanuddin, Makassar (Dr. Fachruddin, Rector) and the Northern Territory Museum (Dr. C. Jack-Hinton, Director).

In mid-July 1987, the reconstruction of the traditional Makassan perahu 'Padewakang' took place at Tanah Beru, based on my earlier researches and with the advice of Nick Burningham of the Conservation Department of the NT Museum, and sailed from Makassar on 17 December 1987. Thirteen Makassan sailors and myself were on board the *Hati Marege*, as she was named, and sailed to Bira, Selayar, Alor and Kisar for revictualling and watering. From there she sailed to Melville Island and along the Arnhem Land coast to Gove.

On board, as one of the crew of the *Hati Marege* was Mansyur Muhayang Daeng Ngewa, a grandson of Husein Daeng Rangka, a folk hero in the 'dreamtime' of the Yulngu people of Arnhem Land. On landing at Gove and on being introduced to his nephew Matjiwi Burrawanga, great grandson of Yocing (Husein), from Elcho Island, a great family reunion took place and dances of welcome were performed for the crew of the *Hati Marege*. Prior genealogical research had been carried out into the family histories of both the Makassar and Yulngu families and, as a result, direct and living proof of these family relationships were established.

Great ceremonies of welcome were performed and family re-unions took place in Yirrkala, Elcho Island and Milingimbi, and at Elcho Island, Mansyur was initiated into the Irritja family in a highly emotional ceremony.

CURRENT RESEARCH

The *Hati Marege* sailed to Darwin from Gove, stopping at Elcho Island, Milingimbi and Port Essington. After a brief period of rest in Darwin the crew returned to a hero's welcome in Makassar and the *Hati Marege* to a place of honour in the forecourt of the NT Museum of Arts Sciences, Darwin. But the research still goes on. As a result of a grant graciously provided under the Northern Territory Government's History Award Scheme, I

was recently enabled to carry out research in Groote Eylandt, in order to establish possible family relations, locate, identify and record Makassan camp sites and other places, and record those stories about the visitors which might survive from times past.

However, no Makassar Warnindilyaugwa relationships were identified from my studies, although stories relating to the visits by the Aboriginal people to Makassar and the Makassar people to Groote Eylandt were recorded (see below). In addition, and very importantly, sites have been identified and recorded on Groote Eylandt, Bickerton and Woodah Islands. The attached map (Fig. 1) indicates the identified sites and provides the Anindilyaugwa place names as well as the Makassar names for those places. Another list on this figure (Fig. 1 last column) provides the English interpretation of those names. Further research is currently planned for other areas of Arnhem Land at Milingimbi, Goulburn and Croker Islands and follow up visits to Yirrkala, Elcho Island and Melville Island. As a result of those researches it is planned to prepare a map of north Australia which will indicate those places visited by the Makassan sailors many years ago and the stories associated with them.

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MAKASSAN SITES

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MAKASSAN NAME	ABORIGINAL NAME	ENGLISH NAMES
MANGKASSARA	ANINDIL YAUGWA	
1. Lemba Bingkura	Arkkbumunanje	Mangrove Bay
2. Batu Lompoa	Bartelumba	Great Rock
3. Lembane I Mankgo	Ambumanja	Bowl Bay
4. Guru Le'eng		Bleck Teacher
5. Baco Oni	Amakilyuwa	Young boys name
6. Ua' ripa	Awarikba	Aboriginal place name
7. Pattannangang Pallu Toaya	Enongbumunanja	Old Cooking Place
8. Luikang Racunga	Yarranye	Poison Island
9. Makkanacapa	Barrumurumanja	Don't worry
10. Carapi	Amungkwulya	Bloodletting
11. Luikang Nalla	Angiyema	Naila's Island
12. Luikang Aroro	Wajilye	Aroro's Island
13. Pulau Iningakumaje	Yingindi Yumanja	Iningakumaje Island
14. Lemba Manggiwang Umba' Umba'	Mangiwangl Umbakumba	Shark Bay also Ombak- Ombak turbulent water
15. Lemba Kurotong	Kuratu - Yandarrnge	Spotted Fish Bay
16. Pulau Daeng Lompo	Dylompo - Alykiyakba	Great Deeng Island
17. Punggondang	Angwarikba	Village of Punggondang
18. Bapa' Tamboro'	Dayborro - Angwerikba	Father Tamboro'
19. Manggalle Nyewe	Mangellenyawa	Murder site
20. Pulau Daeng Muntu	Woodah	Daeng Muntu's Island
21. Bapa' Paso	Yilyakwanjanje	Father Peg
22. Salla' Pancana	Angeminumanja	Pancana Strait
23. Lemba Berua		New Bay.



PGS